

HEADING FOR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY?

You did it! Finally, you've graduated! Now it's off to college or university. The excitement is building: moving away from home, hanging out with friends, staying up all night, no parents! Trying to find the right balance with diabetes can be thrilling, as well as challenging! Here are some helpful hints to help make the transition from living at home to living on your own go smoothly.

The [Diabetes Hope Foundation](#) has published an excellent resource, the [Canadian Guide for Successful Transition to College and University](#), including fact sheets for supports at most accredited colleges and universities across Canada.

Did you know you could be eligible for a program which helps part-time or full-time students with permanent disabilities with the cost of education? Check out the two links below:

- <https://studentaidbc.ca/explore/grants-scholarships/canada-student-grant-students-permanent-disabilities>
- https://studentaidbc.ca/explore/grants-scholarships/bc-supplemental-bursary-students-permanent-disability#Am_I_eligible

STUDENT TIPS FOR SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS/HOUSING PLANS

During the enrolment process:

- Mark the "disability" box on the application form.
 - This notifies the school that you have a medical condition that may require special attention. This will make things easier once you start school.
- Register at the Disabilities Office/Resource Centre.
 - Diabetes isn't a physical disability, but by registering at the office, you may be allowed special/preferred housing, parking and meal plans. This allows for the support you need if/when you need it.
 - For example, you may need to get permission to bring your insulin pump, tester, juice, etc. to certain exams. If you have several exams in a row, your school may be able to help you reschedule exams so you actually have time to take care of your diabetes.
- Get housing that has an open kitchen, or is near a 24-hour food source.
 - For example, a dorm with a late-night cafeteria, or housing near fast food places, or eating spots on campus.
- Get a small fridge for your dorm room.
 - This is a great place for emergency snacks (cheese, milk, juice), not to mention a great place to store insulin or ice packs. This is not intended to be in place of housing near a food source, but as a complement to it.
- Ask for a meal plan (food expenses on campus) that doesn't have a set limit.

- You may need to pay a bit extra for this, but is great to know that you have access to as much food as you may need, when you need it.
- Take advantage of any resources that may come your way.
 - Many schools offer people registered with diabetes a note-taker for any class you may have missed for medical reasons. The school must also allow you to make up any exams that you may have missed for that same reason. Some schools may also have affirmative action programs for students with diabetes. Don't use diabetes as an excuse, but it's nice to know that these services are available if you ever need them.

Not all schools are able to offer all of these services/benefits because of limited resources. Most campuses have some form of support teams in place to help students if they need it. It is best to look around and to consider these options before making any final decisions. Informing as many offices and people at college/university that you have diabetes as you can may help make the transition from living at home to living away from home as smooth as possible.

Exams:

- Have extra food or snacks available when taking major exams e.g. granola bar or Gatorade® during exams, and crackers/cheese and fruit during breaks.
- Inform your test supervisor of your diabetes, and any needs you may have.
- Remember to "graze": strenuous brain activity may affect your blood glucose like physical exercise).
- If you are low during the test, inform your supervisor.
- Let the supervisor know that your meter may "beep" if you need to check your blood glucose level, or that your pump may "click" if you need to give yourself insulin.

Dorm set-up:

- Make your diabetes supplies easily accessible.
- Have certain drawers labelled/designated as "Diabetes Drawer":
 - needles, lancets, strips, meter
 - granola bars, crackers, cookies, juice, Gatorade®
 - sharps container to store used syringes or pen needles
- Have extra food to share with your roommates, so that you can keep your diabetes drawer "off limits".

It is important to let the people around you know that you have diabetes, what it means to have a low blood sugar, what symptoms you may have, and how to treat it.

See also our handout [What to Tell Your Roommate](#).

See also our handout [My Kid is Turning 19](#).

PARENT TIPS

Preparation:

- Visit each campus, if possible.
- Stop into the Students with Disabilities Office/Resource Centre and ask for information.
- Mark the "disability" box on the college/university application form.
- Consider applying/enrolling in the college student health insurance program, even if you already have insurance.
- Ask for special housing, and send forms in on time!
- Ensure your son/daughter gets the flu shot and meningococcal vaccine before leaving for college. Ask the school for a list of recommended vaccinations and plan/time these accordingly.
- Locate several close places to eat (fast food, campus cafeterias, places that are open all night).
- Locate the student health centre.
- Locate the nearest emergency room.
- Help your son or daughter make an appointment with the doctor in the student health centre either just before school starts, or during the first week of school. Have a copy of his/her diabetes records sent to them.
- Have all prescriptions (diabetes-related, and others he/she may need) sent to the school pharmacy (or one close by the campus) before school starts. Call to ensure that things are in place.
- Setting up a standing order for the A1C at a lab on campus or near campus is also very convenient.

Don't forget that your son or daughter needs to see their new adult endocrinologist! By the time university starts, it is very easy to forget about this, because there is so much else going on. Make sure you support your son or daughter to keep up with his/her care with an adult endocrinologist.

Keep in touch! The changes of living away from home and the complete responsibility of diabetes care, as well as pressures at school, may be quite challenging. Blood glucose levels may fluctuate quite a bit during the first month of school, so frequent contact initially with your college student (at any time, day or night), either by phone or e-mail, to discuss blood glucose readings and insulin doses can be equally encouraging for both parent and teen.

Parent Tip of the Year:

Each semester, get the names and numbers of 4 friends who share the same dorm or housing area as your son/daughter. That way, you can call for help should your teen need it.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- National Educational Association of Disabled Students (Canada): www.neads.ca
- Diabetes Hope Foundation: *Canadian Guide for Successful Transition to College and University*: diabeteshopefoundation.com/content/transition-resource-guide-0